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Addison's Disease Likely in JFK

CHICAGO (UPI) — It can be "strongly presumed" that John F. Kennedy had Addison's disease both before and during his presidency, a University of Kansas pathologist said.

The assumption can be made on the basis of surgical reports by newspapers and the American Medical Association involving the late president, Dr. John Nichols wrote in an AMA Journal article.

ADDISON'S disease affects the adrenal glands and can cause emotional instability, nervousness, anemia, digestive disturbances and muscle weakness. Once almost always fatal, it now can be controlled with drugs.

There were reports during Kennedy's presidential campaign and term of office that he had the disease, Kennedy denied them.

Nichols said AMA reports for November, 1955, discuss

adrenocortical insufficiency during surgery, a familiar symptom of Addison's disease.

ONE OF THREE cases reported was a "man, 37 years of age" who had suffered from the disease for seven years, Nichols said.

Nichols said this patient underwent spinal-fusion surgery at the Cornell University Medical College, New York, in October, 1954, and returned four months later

for removal of a metal plate inserted during surgery.

He compares this with newspaper reports of similar surgery at the same time and place performed on Kennedy, then a 37-year-old senator. The reports say Kennedy returned four months later for removal of a metal plate, Nichols said.

"THESE FACTS were independently documented by the two separate disciplines of medicine and journalism prior to (Kennedy's) candidacy for president," Nichols wrote.

"It is most unlikely that

two persons with the same age and clinical history of the late president would have undergone similar surgery in the same hospital on the same day and returned on exactly the same time four months later."

A diagnosis of the disease could have been established at Kennedy's autopsy, but "the autopsy protocol is curiously silent on this point," Nichols said.